UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

Current Affairs Notes · 27 June 2026

The Hindu · Indian Express · PIB | 16 Topics | GS 1 · 2 · 3 + Prelims + Mapping

[TH] The Hindu | [IE] Indian Express | [PIB] Press Info Bureau

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PIB HIGHLIGHTS — 26-27 JUNE 2026 (Curated for UPSC)

1. WORLD'S FIRST: Nuclear-Heat Hydrogen Production via Copper-Chlorine Cycle (FBTR, Kalpakkam)

✓ DAE inaugurated the world's FIRST hydrogen production facility based on the Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle using nuclear process heat from the Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR) at IGCAR (Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research), Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu. (June 26, 2026)

✓ Inaugurated by: Ajit Kumar Mohanty (DAE Secretary + AEC Chairman); at IGCAR, Kalpakkam. Process developed by: BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre), Mumbai — an indigenous Indian development.

✓ What the Cu-Cl cycle does: Water is split into hydrogen (H_2) and oxygen (O_2) using a series of chemical reactions involving copper (Cu) and chlorine (Cl) compounds; the process uses HEAT (from the nuclear reactor) rather than electricity (as in conventional electrolysis); this is called a 'thermochemical' cycle.

✓ Why nuclear heat? The Cu-Cl cycle requires temperatures of 400-550°C — achievable from fast breeder reactor waste heat; this makes nuclear 'pink hydrogen' (hydrogen from nuclear energy) possible at higher thermodynamic efficiency than electrolysis-based green hydrogen.

✓ FBTR (Fast Breeder Test Reactor): India's sodium-cooled, fast spectrum research reactor at IGCAR Kalpakkam; started 1985; Stage 2 of India's 3-stage nuclear power programme; laid the foundation for PFBR (Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor, 500 MW, also at Kalpakkam — nearing completion).

✓ Significance: Demonstrates that nuclear energy can produce clean hydrogen without the electricity conversion losses of electrolysis; particularly valuable for hard-to-abate sectors (fertiliser, steel, heavy transport) that cannot be easily electrified.

✓ GS3 Angle: Nuclear energy; 3-stage nuclear programme; IGCAR; BARC; FBTR; green/pink hydrogen; thermochemical hydrogen; National Green Hydrogen Mission (5 MMTPA by 2030 — this adds a nuclear pathway alongside the solar/wind electrolysis pathway).

2. NCORD VISION DOCUMENT ON DRUG CONTROL 2026-2029 — Amit Shah

✓ Amit Shah chaired the 10th Apex-Level Meeting of NCORD (Narco Coordination Centre) and unveiled the 'Vision Document on Drug Control (2026-2029).'

✓ Vision Document focus areas: (1) Supply-side disruption — intensified operations against drug production zones (Bastar/LWE areas, coastal smuggling); (2) Demand-side reduction — Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan Phase 3 (targeting youth, schools, colleges); (3) Technology — AI-powered drug trafficking pattern recognition; dark web monitoring; (4) Capacity building — training 50,000+ anti-narcotics police officers by 2029; (5) International cooperation — bilateral treaties with Myanmar, Thailand, Afghanistan for Golden Triangle/Golden Crescent supply disruption.

✓ Key statistics shared: Rs 21,000+ crore narcotics seized in FY26 (highest ever); 17,000+ arrests; synthetic drug seizures up 40% year-on-year; online drug sales (dark web + Telegram) now 15% of all drug trafficking in India.

✓ India's drug routes: Golden Crescent (Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran → Northwest India: Punjab, Haryana); Golden Triangle (Myanmar-Laos-Thailand → Northeast India: Manipur, Mizoram); Sea routes (Maharashtra, Gujarat coasts); Online/dark web (pan-India).

✓ GS3 Angle: NCORD; NDPS Act 1985; NCB; narcotics trafficking; Golden Crescent; Golden Triangle; internal security; Nasha Mukt Bharat.

3. BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAY JAYANTI + RAJARSHI SHAHU JI MAHARAJ

✓ PM Modi paid tribute to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay on his Jayanti — born June 27, 1838 (Naihati, West Bengal); died April 8, 1894 (Calcutta). Father of Bengal Renaissance; Deputy Collector under British India.

✓ Key contributions: Authored Anandamath (1882) — the novel containing Vande Mataram, which became a key song of the Indian independence movement; other works: Durgeshnandini (1865, first Bengali novel), Kapalkundala, Devi Choudhurani, Rajsinha. Used Bengali prose as a literary and political tool.

✓ Vande Mataram: Sanskrit poem embedded in Anandamath; first 2 stanzas adopted by INC as the national song of the independence movement in 1896; later adopted as National Song of India (vs. Jana Gana Mana = National Anthem); controversy about religious overtones (calls the motherland as goddess Durga) led to Muslim League resistance.

✓ Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj (1874-1922): Progressive King of Kolhapur Princely State; pioneer of social reform in Maharashtra; introduced 50% reservation for backward classes in Kolhapur (1902) — decades before the Constitution; patron of Ambedkar's education; abolished child marriage and devadasi system; promoted education for women and lower castes.

✓ GS1 Angle: Modern Indian history; Bengal Renaissance; Anandamath; Vande Mataram; social reform movements; Shahu Maharaj as OBC/Dalit rights pioneer.

🔔 4. GREEN UREA + JAN VISHWAS HEALTH REFORMS + NBA THREATENED SPECIES SOP

✓ GREEN UREA ROADMAP: Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers is exploring a roadmap to make Green Urea production a reality in India. Green urea = urea produced using green hydrogen (from renewable energy electrolysis) instead of natural gas-based steam methane reforming. Currently 100% of India's urea production uses fossil fuel-derived hydrogen. National Green Hydrogen Mission's 5 MMTPA by 2030 target — if achieved — could partially feed India's urea production with green hydrogen. Energy required: 1 tonne of urea requires ~2,000 kWh of electricity if made from green hydrogen; current renewable electricity cost of Rs 2.12/kWh would make green urea competitive by 2030.

✓ JAN VISHWAS ACT HEALTH REFORMS: Ministry of Health operationalised Jan Vishwas Act reforms in the health sector — decriminalising minor offences under Drugs, Cosmetics, and Food Safety laws; replacing criminal penalties with fines for first-time technical violations; reduces compliance burden for pharmacies, manufacturers, and healthcare providers. FSSAI licensing regulations also amended to enhance ease of doing business.

✓ NBA THREATENED SPECIES SOP: National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) released Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for scientific identification and notification of Threatened Species by States and UTs. SOPs provide a systematic methodology for: identifying declining species; conducting population surveys; notifying them under the Biological Diversity Act 2002; empowering State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) to develop conservation plans. Connects to India's Kunming-Montreal 30x30 commitments.

✓ GS2/GS3 Angle: Green hydrogen; urea production; Jan Vishwas Act; ease of doing business; NBA; biodiversity; threatened species.

GS PAPER 2 — International Relations

1. Iran Fires on Vessel in Hormuz — Muscat Accord at Breaking Point

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GS 2: International Relations: US-Iran Muscat Accord; Strait of Hormuz; UNCLOS; Freedom of Navigation; India's energy security.

- June 25, 2026: Taiwan's Evergreen Marine's Singapore-flagged container ship 'Ever Lovely' was struck near Oman while transiting a route recommended by the British navy agency UKMTO; nobody was hurt; two US officials confirmed to Reuters that Iran fired on the ship.
- June 26: Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi: 'Safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz cannot be guaranteed under ambiguous arrangements, parallel routes or decision-making that does not take Iran's role as a coastal state into account.'
- IRGC action: Three foreign tankers attempting what Iran called 'unauthorised passage' were turned back after IRGC warnings.
- IMO response: Temporarily paused its convoy operation to escort ships through Hormuz after the Ever Lovely incident, pending security guarantees.

What the Ever Lovely Incident Means for the Muscat Accord

- The Muscat Accord (June 14) included Iran's commitment to allow free shipping through Hormuz for the 60-day Phase 2 nuclear negotiation period (until August 13). Iran's firing on the Ever Lovely is a direct violation of this commitment — it signals that the IRGC is not fully under political control or that Iran is deliberately testing the limits of the Accord.
- The 'Persian Gulf Strait Authority': Iran established this body to manage vessel passage requests through Hormuz; it claims ships must coordinate with this authority for 'authorised passage'; the Ever Lovely was using the IMO/UKMTO-recommended southern route (through Omani waters) which Iran considers 'unauthorised.'
- UNCLOS confrontation: UNCLOS Part III (Straits Regime) gives all ships the right of 'transit passage' — continuous and expeditious transit without prior Iranian approval; Iran's 'Strait Authority' requirement and 'toll-charging' proposals directly violate UNCLOS; the US and 6 Gulf states issued a joint statement rejecting Iran's toll claims.
- Iran's strategic calculus: By firing on a ship and asserting Hormuz control rights, Iran is: (a) demonstrating IRGC independence from the political decision to pursue the Muscat Accord; (b) using Hormuz leverage in Phase 2 nuclear negotiations — 'we can turn the tap off at any time'; (c) testing Trump's resolve before the August 13 deadline.

Market and India Reactions

- Oil prices: Fell by 3%+ (markets saw Iran's assertion as a LONG-TERM threat to Hormuz, not an immediate closure); Brent at ~$89 — market believes Accord will hold, but priced in higher risk premium.
- IMO convoy suspension: A major setback for the evacuation of ~280 stranded vessels; 11,000+ seafarers (including 1,200-1,500 Indians) remain stranded; the IMO pause means evacuation is indefinitely delayed.
- India's response: DG Shipping issued advisory to Indian-flagged and Indian-crewed vessels: 'avoid the Hormuz transit until the security situation is clarified'; INS Kochi (guided missile destroyer) deployed to the northern Arabian Sea for contingency.
- Mines in Hormuz: USGS estimated 80 mines remain in historical Hormuz shipping lanes from the February-June 2026 conflict period; even 'reopened' shipping is navigating a mined strait.

UPSC ANGLE

• The Accord's stability: The June 25 Ever Lovely incident, Iran's June 26 toll-control assertion, plus Iran's June 19 suspension of nuclear talks (after Israeli Lebanon strikes) — THREE escalation events in 8 days — severely test the Muscat Accord's durability.

• India's exposure: With 40%+ of India's crude transiting Hormuz and 60%+ of DAP fertiliser imported through Gulf ports — any renewed Hormuz closure would reimpose the May-June 2026 economic pain. India must accelerate: SPR expansion; domestic fertiliser supply chain; alternative shipping routes through Oman (by-passing Hormuz).

- **Ever Lovely (Singapore-flagged)** — Container ship of Taiwan's Evergreen Marine Corporation; struck by Iran on June 25, 2026 while transiting the UKMTO-recommended southern Hormuz route; no casualties; the incident triggered IMO convoy pause and Iran's formal reassertion of Hormuz control rights.
- **UKMTO (United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations)** — UK Royal Navy's maritime security coordination centre in Dubai; provides navigational advice, threat warnings, and convoy route recommendations for commercial shipping in the Gulf and Indian Ocean; its recommended 'southern route' through Omani waters was the route used by the Ever Lovely.
- **Persian Gulf Strait Authority** — Iranian body established to manage shipping passage requests through the Strait of Hormuz; Iran requires ships to 'coordinate' with this authority; rejected by the US, EU, and GCC as violating UNCLOS transit passage rights.

2. India-New Zealand FTA — A Modern Trade Partnership: What It Covers

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GS 2 / GS 3: IR: India-New Zealand FTA; CPTPP; Pacific trade; services; GI tags; GS3: Economy — trade.

▸ India and New Zealand announced completion of substantive negotiations for an India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (INFTA) — the signing is expected later in 2026.

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▸ Context: NZ PM Christopher Luxon visited India in April 2026; the FTA announcement follows India's successful trade deal with Australia (ECTA, 2022) and Israel (FTA, 2024) and is part of India's IndoPacific trade architecture.
▸ India-NZ trade (2025-26): ~$1.8 billion annually (modest but growing); NZ primarily exports dairy (blocked under FTA exclusions), kiwifruit, wine, wool, educational services; India primarily exports pharma, textiles, IT services, manufactured goods.
▸ The dairy exclusion: New Zealand is the world's top dairy exporter; India's dairy farmers are among the most politically sensitive constituencies; INFTA explicitly excludes butter, whole milk powder, and cheese from tariff concessions — a critical India concession that made the FTA possible.

- What India gets: NZ reduces tariffs on Indian pharmaceuticals to zero (currently 5-15%); zero duty for Indian IT professionals' temporary movement (professional mobility chapter); Indian textiles get better access; NZ's Pacific Pathway — NZ is a gateway to Pacific Island nations (Fiji, Solomon Islands, PNG) where India seeks more trade.
- What NZ gets: India reduces tariffs on NZ education services (student visa streamlining, online NZ degree recognition); NZ wine and kiwifruit get modest tariff reductions; NZ wool gets zero-duty access (India processes ~40% of NZ's wool for export to third countries).
- CPTPP connection: New Zealand is a member of CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership); the INFTA provides India a bilateral pathway to engage with CPTPP-member markets without formally joining CPTPP (which India has declined due to concerns about Chinese influence via the RCEP alternative route).
- GI tags: 150+ Indian GI products receive protection in NZ; NZ Manuka Honey gets GI recognition in India — a rare bilateral GI recognition going both ways.

UPSC ANGLE
• India's expanding FTA network: 2022-2026 has been India's most productive FTA period: UAE (CEPA, 2022); Australia (ECTA, 2022); UK (CETA, 2025, effective July 15, 2026); EU FTA (December 2026 target); New Zealand (INFTA, 2026); Israel (FTA, 2024). India's FTA strategy is now clearly 'developed-market-first' — accessing wealthy consumers rather than competing with China in the RCEP space.
• NZ's Strategic Indo-Pacific position: New Zealand is culturally and geographically part of the Western Pacific; it has a 'Pacific Reset' strategy (closer engagement with Pacific Island nations); India sees NZ as a partner in the Blue Pacific Continent — connecting India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine to the Pacific.

- **INFTA (India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement)** — FTA under negotiation; concluded substantive talks 2026; excludes NZ dairy from full tariff concessions; covers goods (pharma, textiles, kiwifruit), services (IT, education), professional mobility, GI protection.
- **CPTPP** — Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership; 12 member countries (Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Vietnam, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, UK); no China; India not a member; India's bilateral FTAs with NZ, Australia, UK provide CPTPP-adjacent market access.

3. 'Genocidal Intent' — What the New UN Commission Report Means for Cases Against Israel

[IE] Page Online

GS 2: International Relations: Gaza War; ICJ; International Humanitarian Law; UN Commission of Inquiry; Genocide Convention.

▸ The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (UN CoI) released its latest report (June 26, 2026) that found 'reasonable grounds to believe that Israel has demonstrated genocidal intent' in its military operations in Gaza.
▸ What 'genocidal intent' means legally: Under the 1948 Genocide Convention (Article 2), genocide requires BOTH: (a) genocidal acts (killing members of a group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting destructive conditions of life, imposing measures to prevent births, forcibly transferring children); AND (b) intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.

‣ The CoI's finding: The Commission found evidence of genocidal acts AND circumstantial evidence of genocidal intent — based on statements by Israeli officials, military directives, scale of civilian casualties, and aid blockades.
‣ Israel's response: Israel rejected the CoI's findings as 'systematically biased' and 'anti-Semitic'; Israel does not cooperate with the CoI; the Israeli government and military maintain their operations are legitimate self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

- The ICJ case (South Africa v Israel): South Africa filed a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December 2023 under the Genocide Convention; the ICJ issued provisional measures (January 2024) ordering Israel to prevent acts that could constitute genocide; the CoI's 'genocidal intent' finding strengthens South Africa's case in the ongoing ICJ proceedings.
- Legal distinction: The CoI's finding of 'genocidal intent' is not the same as a criminal conviction; it is an administrative finding by a UN body; a genocide conviction requires a judicial finding by the ICJ (for state responsibility) or the ICC (for individual criminal responsibility). The CoI's report is evidence, not a verdict.
- ICC jurisdiction: The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for both Israeli PM Netanyahu and Defence Minister Gallant AND for Hamas leaders (October 2023 attacks) in November 2024; the 'genocidal intent' CoI finding may inform additional ICC case development.
- India's position: India has consistently called for a 'two-state solution' and an 'immediate cessation of hostilities'; India abstained on several UNGA resolutions on Gaza; India does not describe the Israeli operations as genocide — maintaining its balanced position between Western allies (who defend Israel) and Arab/Muslim states (who support Palestine).

UPSC ANGLE
• Genocide Convention (1948): Article 2 defines genocide; Article 9 gives ICJ jurisdiction over disputes between states; India ratified the Convention in 1959. The Convention's definition is the international standard — the CoI's application of this standard to Israel-Gaza is unprecedented in scope.
• The ongoing Gaza conflict (2026): The Israel-Hamas war that began with Hamas's October 7, 2023 attacks and Israel's subsequent military operations has killed 45,000+ Palestinians (Gaza Health Ministry data, contested by Israel); the humanitarian situation involves water, food, and medical shortages.

- **UN Commission of Inquiry (CoI) on OPT** — Independent body established by UN Human Rights Council to investigate violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Israel does not cooperate; its reports are admissible as evidence in ICJ and ICC proceedings.
- **Genocide Convention (1948)** — Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; Article 2 defines genocide as specific acts with intent to destroy a group; ratified by 153 states including India (1959); ICJ has jurisdiction over state responsibility under Article 9.
- **ICJ (International Court of Justice)** — Principal judicial organ of the UN; settles disputes between states; South Africa v Israel genocide case under ICJ proceedings; issued provisional measures (January 2024) ordering Israel to prevent genocidal acts; final judgment expected years away.

4. PM Modi to Visit Seychelles — India-Seychelles Special Bilateral Ties

[IE] Page Online

GS 2: International Relations: India-Seychelles; Indian Ocean; SAGAR; Indian diaspora in Seychelles; maritime security.

‣ PM Modi is visiting Seychelles as part of an Indian Ocean diplomatic sweep — connecting to India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) Indian Ocean doctrine.
‣ India-Seychelles unique demographic link: Seychelles has a population of ~96,000; approximately 5% (4,800-5,000) are of Indian origin; the Indian community traces to indentured labourers brought in the 18th-19th centuries; Seychelles is a rare case where Indians form a significant proportion of a tiny island nation's population.
‣ Strategic significance: Seychelles is at the junction of Indian Ocean shipping lanes (between East Africa, Middle East, and South Asia); it is a key node for: IOR (Indian Ocean Region) maritime surveillance; anti-piracy operations; Indian naval presence in the Western Indian Ocean.

▸ Defence cooperation: India gifted a Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft to Seychelles (2013); India deployed INS naval vessels for EEZ surveillance; India built the Assumption Island (Seychelles) infrastructure as a logistics/surveillance facility — a project that faced local political controversy but India sees as strategic.

- The Assumption Island controversy: India signed an agreement with Seychelles for access to Assumption Island (outer island of Seychelles) to build a jetty, airstrip, and barracks for use by both countries; Seychellois opposition raised sovereignty concerns; the project was delayed but not abandoned. Modi's visit may include updates on the Assumption Island progress.
- BIMSTEC and Western Indian Ocean: India's maritime strategy involves relationships with all Indian Ocean rim states; Seychelles connects to: East African arc (Mozambique, Tanzania, Madagascar); Somalia anti-piracy zone (ISAF/CTF-151); Arabian Sea trade lanes (60%+ of India's trade + Hormuz oil imports pass near Seychelles EEZ).
- QUAD and Pacific connections: Unlike ASEAN or Pacific partners, Seychelles (in Western Indian Ocean) fills the gap in India's maritime partnership network — between Gulf states and East Africa.

UPSC ANGLE

• India's 'necklace of pearls' counter-strategy: China has built relationships with Indian Ocean rim states (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Djibouti, Pakistan's Gwadar) — India's relationships with Seychelles, Mauritius, Maldives, Sri Lanka (recovering from political tensions), Bangladesh, and Myanmar are India's counter-strategy to Chinese encirclement.

• India and African Union: PM Modi at QUAD and G7 advocated for the African Union's permanent membership of the G20 (granted 2023); Seychelles is an AU member; India's Africa engagement includes SAARC alternative through Indian Ocean relationships.

- **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** — India's Indian Ocean doctrine announced by PM Modi in 2015 in Mauritius; focuses on cooperative maritime security, freedom of navigation, sustainable development, and rules-based order in the IOR; Seychelles is a key partner.
- **Assumption Island** — Outer island of Seychelles; India-Seychelles agreement for a joint-use maritime surveillance facility (jetty, airstrip, barracks); connectivity to MILEX (Military Exercise) frameworks; India's strategy for Western Indian Ocean presence.

GS PAPER 2 — Governance · Health

5. NFSA Amendments — 7 kg Per Person, Maximum 35 kg Per Household

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GS 3: Economy: National Food Security Act; PDS; Ration System; Food Subsidy; Right to Food.

▸ The Central Government tabled amendments to the National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA) — the key change: the per-person entitlement increases from 5 kg to 7 kg/month, while a household cap of 35 kg/month is introduced.

▸ The existing system (NFSA 2013): Priority Households — 5 kg/person/month of rice (Rs 3/kg), wheat (Rs 2/kg), coarse grains (Rs 1/kg); Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households — 35 kg/household/month (already existing); Coverage: 67% of India's population (75% rural, 50% urban) under Priority and AAY categories.

▸ PM-GKAY integration: PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (launched during COVID, providing free grains) was merged with NFSA from January 2023; grains are now provided FREE (zero cost) to NFSA beneficiaries; the amendment enhances this free entitlement.

▸ The 35 kg cap: For a 5-member household, 7 kg × 5 persons = 35 kg — the cap equals the existing AAY entitlement; this prevents larger households from receiving disproportionately more; a family of 6 would still get 35 kg (not 42 kg).

- Fiscal impact: The additional 2 kg/person/month (from 5 to 7) for ~80 crore Priority Household beneficiaries = 160 lakh tonnes additional grain annually; at FCI procurement and distribution cost of ~Rs 30/kg, this adds ~Rs 48,000 crore annually to the food subsidy bill. The Government will need to ensure adequate buffer stocks (currently FCI holds ~80 million tonnes — sufficient).
- Political context: The NFSA amendment comes ahead of several state elections (Bihar, Maharashtra) and aligns with the 'welfarism' political strategy; it also responds to the Kharif 2026 monsoon deficit stress — higher grain entitlements provide direct food security during an anticipated shortage year.
- Right to Food jurisprudence: The NFSA 2013 was enacted following the SC's landmark order in People's Union for Civil Liberties v Union of India (2001) which directed the government to operationalise the right to food as part of Article 21 (right to life with dignity); the NFSA amendment strengthens this right-based framework.
- Aadhaar-linked PDS: All NFSA ration cards are now Aadhaar-linked (portability through 'One Nation One Ration Card'); beneficiaries can collect grains from any Fair Price Shop across India — migratory workers particularly benefit.

UPSC ANGLE

• NFSA 2013 key facts: Enacted 2013 under PM Manmohan Singh; covers 81.35 crore persons; two categories: Priority Households (5 kg/person now amended to 7 kg) and AAY (35 kg/household); subsidy: Rs 1.84 lakh crore annually (pre-amendment).

• One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC): Portability system; any NFSA beneficiary can collect grains from ANY Fair Price Shop (FPS) in any state; critical for migrant workers; linked to Aadhaar; 96%+ of NFSA beneficiaries on Aadhaar.

- **NFSA 2013** — National Food Security Act; covers 67% of India's population (81+ crore persons); right to subsidised/free food grains; two categories: Priority Households and AAY; amendment increases per-person entitlement from 5 to 7 kg with 35 kg household cap.
- **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** — Poorest of the poor category under PDS; 35 kg/household/month at subsidised prices; launched 2000 by Atal Bihari Vajpayee government; covers ~2.5 crore households; NFSA brought AAY under its statutory framework.

6. Why the Govt Banned 16 Fixed-Dose Combination Drugs

[IE] Page Online

GS 2: Health: FDC drugs; CDSCO; Drug Regulation; Irrational Drug Combinations; Rational Pharmacotherapy.

‣ CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation) issued a prohibition order banning 16 new Fixed-Dose Combinations (FDCs) — including combinations of antibiotics, antacids, vitamins, and aloe vera creams.

‣ Why FDCs are banned when 'irrational': An FDC is irrational if: (a) the dose of one active ingredient in the combination is medically inappropriate; (b) the combination has not been proven to be more effective than the individual components given separately; (c) the combination increases the risk of adverse effects without therapeutic benefit; (d) the combination is designed primarily to increase sales rather than improve treatment outcomes.

‣ The 16 banned FDCs include: An antibiotic + antacid combination (antacid reduces antibiotic absorption); a vitamin B12 + aloe vera cream (no evidence aloe enhances B12 activity); an antibiotic + paracetamol + antihistamine (3-drug combination with no proven superiority over single drugs); combinations marketed for 'skin lightening' with no scientific basis.

‣ CDSCO's process: Under Section 26A of Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 — the Central Government may prohibit manufacture and sale of drugs if they are likely to cause risk to public safety; CDSCO's Expert Committee reviews evidence and recommends bans; the 2018 mass FDC ban (350+ FDCs) set the precedent.

- The antibiotic resistance connection: Many irrational FDCs contain antibiotics in sub-therapeutic doses (combined with other drugs) — this sub-therapeutic antibiotic exposure is a major driver of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR); banning irrational antibiotic FDCs is a public health measure to reduce AMR.

- Industry impact: Indian pharmaceutical companies have invested in marketing these FDCs (which are often not regulated internationally); 16 new bans add to the 350+ banned since 2018; companies argue they have invested in manufacturing capacity and clinical data.
- The larger FDC problem: Despite 350+ FDC bans since 2018, many are still available at pharmacies (poor enforcement — as covered in June 25 notes); the CDSCO's banning authority is undermined by state-level enforcement gaps.

UPSC ANGLE

• CDSCO and WHO pre-qualification: India's pharmaceutical export reputation requires clean domestic FDC regulations; if India permits irrational FDCs domestically, it raises doubts about India's regulatory framework for exported generics — a commercial as well as public health concern.

• Section 26A vs. Section 26B: Section 26A of Drugs and Cosmetics Act = prohibition of drug manufacture/sale; Section 26B = price capping; NPPA (National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority) uses Section 26B to cap prices of essential medicines under DPCO (Drug Price Control Order).

- **FDC (Fixed-Dose Combination)** — A single pharmaceutical product containing two or more active ingredients; rational FDCs improve patient compliance and treatment outcomes; irrational FDCs combine drugs that don't benefit from combination or are at inappropriate doses.
- **Section 26A (Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940)** — Empowers Central Government to prohibit manufacture, sale, or distribution of drugs deemed to be hazardous or not meeting safety/efficacy standards; basis for all CDSCO FDC bans.

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7. Tata Sons and RBI's Revised Upper Layer NBFC Rules — Will Tata Sons Have to Go Public?

[IE] Page Online

GS 3: Economy: NBFC; RBI Regulation; Scale-Based Regulation; Upper Layer NBFC; IPO requirements.

‣ The Reserve Bank of India has issued revised guidelines under its Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework for NBFCs — with specific implications for 'Upper Layer' NBFCs like Tata Sons.

‣ Background: RBI's SBR (2021) categorised NBFCs into 4 layers based on size, activity, and interconnectedness: Base Layer; Middle Layer; Upper Layer; Top Layer. The 'Upper Layer' NBFCs (the largest) face the most stringent regulations — including a requirement to LIST on stock exchanges within 3 years of being designated 'Upper Layer.'

‣ Tata Sons: The holding company of the Tata Group; one of India's most valuable companies; was designated an Upper Layer NBFC in 2022; this meant Tata Sons would have been required to IPO (list on stock exchanges) by September 2025.

‣ The 2026 revision: RBI's revised guidelines have modified the Upper Layer listing requirement — it now applies ONLY to Upper Layer NBFCs that have crossed a specific asset size AND are primarily engaged in investment activity (not industrial conglomerates); this has been interpreted as giving Tata Sons a reprieve.

- Why Tata Sons resisted IPO: As a holding company of 30+ listed subsidiaries (TCS, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Titan, etc.), Tata Sons' own listing would require full disclosure of its ownership structure, inter-group transactions, and cross-holdings — the Tata family (Tata Trusts own 66% of Tata Sons) has fiercely protected its privacy and control structure.
- The RBI's original intent: Upper Layer NBFC listing was intended to improve market discipline — public shareholders would scrutinize the NBFC's financial practices; for a pure NBFC (like a large NBFC lender), this makes sense; for Tata Sons (which is primarily an industrial holding company with NBFC registration for inter-group lending), the listing requirement was arguably misapplied.
- What the revised rule means: NBFCs primarily engaged in 'holding and investment' in group companies that have their own listed subsidiaries may be exempted from the listing requirement; Tata Sons interprets this as applying to its structure. RBI has not formally confirmed this interpretation.
- Scale-Based Regulation: RBI's October 2021 SBR framework for NBFCs; 4-tier structure: Base Layer (low systemic risk, minimal regulation); Middle Layer (higher regulation, similar to banks); Upper Layer (bank-like regulation + listing requirement); Top Layer (no NBFC currently designated, would face bank-equivalent regulation).

UPSC ANGLE

• NBFC significance in India's financial system: NBFCs provide 40%+ of credit to MSMEs, microfinance borrowers, vehicle finance, housing finance; total NBFC credit exposure ~Rs 35 lakh crore; the failure of IL&FS (2018) and DHFL (2019) showed systemic risks from large NBFC failures — SBR was RBI's response.

• Tata Sons' structure: Tata Trusts (66%) → Tata Sons (unlisted holding company) → 30+ listed subsidiaries; Tata Sons also holds Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), which alone is India's most valuable company by market cap.

- **Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) for NBFCs** — RBI's 2021 framework; 4-layer classification: Base, Middle, Upper, Top; Upper Layer NBFCs face bank-like regulation + listing requirement; applied to large NBFCs like Tata Sons; 2026 revision modified the listing requirement's scope.
- **Upper Layer NBFC** — NBFCs in the top 10 by their regulatory score (asset size, leverage, interconnectedness); face the highest NBFC regulation including listing on stock exchanges within 3 years of designation; Tata Sons, L&T Finance, Bajaj Finance are examples.

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8. Jonnagiri Gold Mining Project AP — India's Largest Private Sector Gold Mine

[IE] Page Online

GS 3: Economy: Mining; Gold; MMDR Act; Andhra Pradesh; Critical Minerals; Mining Sector.

‣ The Jonnagiri Greenfield Gold Mining Project in Andhra Pradesh (Kurnool district) is set to become India's largest private sector gold mine — being developed by Deccan Gold Mines Ltd (DGML).

‣ Scale: The Jonnagiri deposit has proven and probable reserves of ~27 tonnes of gold; total project cost: Rs 700 crore (Phase 1); expected production: 1.5-2 tonnes of gold per year (Phase 1 at 1 MTPA ore processing).

‣ Context: India produces very little domestic gold — approximately 2-3 tonnes annually (vs. consumption of 800-900 tonnes/year); India imports ~85-90% of its gold (primarily from Switzerland, UAE, South Africa); gold imports are India's 2nd largest import item after crude oil (~$45 billion annually).

‣ Significance: India has significant geological gold potential (Dharwar Craton in Karnataka-AP is among the oldest gold-bearing geological formations); but exploration and extraction are underdeveloped; Jonnagiri's development could trigger more private investment in Indian gold mining.

- India's gold import burden: Gold imports of $45 billion/year are the single largest current account drain after oil; if India could develop domestic gold production to even 50 tonnes/year (from current 2-3 tonnes), it could save ~$3.5 billion annually in import costs.
- MMDR Act and mining in India: Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act 1957 (significantly amended 2015, 2021) governs mining exploration and extraction; gold is a notified mineral requiring central government approval for blocks above a size threshold; the 2021 amendment expanded commercial mining and auction-based allocation, enabling Jonnagiri's development.
- Precious metals and critical minerals: Gold is not classified as a 'critical mineral' in India's Critical Mineral List (2023, 30 minerals); but gold's strategic importance (foreign exchange, jewellery industry employing 2 million, RBI's reserve asset) makes domestic production strategically valuable.
- Gold Council Implications: India's World Gold Council chapter has long advocated for simplified gold mining regulations; Jonnagiri's development may trigger a policy review to streamline gold mining approvals — potentially a 'Gold Mining Mission' analogous to the Critical Minerals Mission.

UPSC ANGLE

• Dharwar Craton: An ancient geological formation in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh (~2.5-3.5 billion years old); one of the world's major Archaean cratons; contains significant gold deposits (Kolar Gold Fields — India's richest gold mine — is also on the Dharwar Craton; Kolar closed in 2001 due to depth and cost challenges).

• India's gold reserves: India (collectively households and RBI) holds ~25,000 tonnes of gold — the largest household gold accumulation globally; but this is above-ground (jewellery, reserves); below-ground domestic production is negligible.

- 📌 **Jonnagiri Gold Mine** — Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh; developed by Deccan Gold Mines Ltd; ~27 tonnes proven reserves; 1.5-2 tonnes/year production (Phase 1); India's largest private sector gold mining project; Rs 700 crore Phase 1 cost.
- 📌 **Dharwar Craton** — Ancient geological formation in Karnataka-AP (~2.5-3.5 billion years old); gold-bearing schist belts; hosts Kolar Gold Fields (closed 2001) and Jonnagiri; one of India's most prospective gold metallogenic provinces.

9. How Trump's Iran Posts Zigzagged — AI, Misinformation, and Modern Diplomacy

[TH] Page 13

GS 2: IR: Social Media in Diplomacy; Trump and Iran; Misinformation; AI-generated content; Two-Level Game.

‣ The Hindu analysis: Trump's Truth Social posts on Iran showed dramatic inconsistencies during the Iran war (February-June 2026) — threatening maximum pressure one day, then praising the Muscat Accord the next, then accusing Iran of violations.
‣ Key zigzags: Feb 28 (war starts): 'We will COMPLETELY OBLITERATE Iran if they don't surrender in 48 hours'; March 14: 'Very productive conversations with Iran — maybe we can make a deal'; April 2: 'Sanctions maximum pressure BACK ON'; June 14 (Muscat Accord): 'The best deal I've ever made — peace in the Middle East'; June 25 (Ever Lovely incident): 'Iran violated the ceasefire — I may have to go back to bombing.'
‣ AI-generated content issue: Several Trump posts on Iran during the war period were identified as being influenced by AI-drafted content (some were traced to AI 'briefing summaries' prepared by DOGE-aligned contractors that contained factual errors about Iran's military capabilities); this is the first documented case of AI-influenced presidential communications shaping active war diplomacy.
‣ Impact: Markets and oil prices moved on every Trump post; Iranian government officials explicitly referenced specific Trump social media posts in their public communications — creating a feedback loop where social media rhetoric affected real-world diplomatic positions.

- The Two-Level Game in reverse: Traditional diplomacy involves leaders making public statements for domestic consumption while their diplomats negotiate quietly; Trump's Truth Social posts muddled this — his public statements affected the diplomatic track (Vance-Ghalibaf at Bürgenstock) by giving Iranian hardliners ammunition to justify hawkish positions.
- Implications for global stability: When a superpower president's social media posts directly move oil markets (Brent crude moved $3-5/barrel on major Trump Iran posts) and affect diplomatic negotiations, the traditional distinction between 'communication' and 'policy' collapses.

10. CBSE Foreign Languages: Classes 7-9 Students Can Keep Two Languages for Now

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: Governance: NEP 2020; 3-Language Formula; CBSE; Foreign Language Education; Centre-State Relations.

‣ CBSE clarified that students in Classes 7-9 currently studying TWO foreign languages (e.g., French + German, or French + Japanese) may continue doing so in the current academic year — despite NEP 2020's 3-language formula which might otherwise restrict to one foreign language.
‣ Context: NEP 2020 recommends the 3-language formula (mother tongue + Hindi + English, or regional language variations); it doesn't explicitly allow foreign languages as the 'third language' beyond the NEP framework — creating confusion about whether students learning two foreign languages must drop one.
‣ CBSE's clarification: Students can continue their current foreign language combination; the full NEP foreign language policy will be clarified in new curriculum framework guidelines to be released in 2026-27.

▸ Languages involved: French (most popular — 6+ lakh CBSE students), German, Japanese, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Portuguese — offered by CBSE schools under School Education Board approvals.

- NEP's actual position on foreign languages (Chapter 4.19): 'Classical languages and literatures of India are a treasured heritage... foreign languages, if they are being studied, should preferably be one of the languages of India's closer partners'; NEP does NOT prohibit foreign languages — it prioritises Indian languages and suggests limiting to one foreign language in the formal curriculum.
- The Nagaland context: As covered June 27, CBSE schools in Nagaland (where English is the official language and tribal languages are the mother tongue) face a different version of the 3-language problem; the foreign language clarification partially addresses their concern by allowing existing language combinations to continue.

11. Govt Asks Hospitals to Publish Post-Transplant Survival Data

[TH] Page 5

GS 2: Health: Organ Transplant; NOTTO; Transparency in Healthcare; Clinical Outcomes Data; THOTA.

▸ MoHFW issued a directive requiring all registered organ transplant hospitals to publish their post-transplant survival statistics publicly — on their websites and on the NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation) portal.
▸ Data required: 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year patient survival rates; graft survival rates; volume of transplants by organ type; waiting time statistics; complication rates — all published annually.
▸ Rationale: India has 256 registered transplant hospitals; but outcomes vary dramatically; patients currently have no way to compare hospitals; public survival data empowers patients to make informed choices and creates performance incentives for hospitals.
▸ International context: US UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing) and UK NHS both publish hospital-level transplant outcomes publicly; India is adopting this best practice.

- Connection to the 5-lakh pledge milestone (June 26 PIB): The organ donation milestone (5 lakh registered pledges — June 2026) shows public willingness to donate; but the transplant system's quality must also improve to make donated organs produce good outcomes; publishing survival data is part of quality improvement.

UPSC ANGLE
• NOTTO Portal: Will host hospital-level transplant outcomes publicly; currently only shows waiting lists and organ availability data; the new requirement to publish survival statistics transforms NOTTO from a logistics platform to a healthcare quality transparency platform.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

DAE: Cu-Cl Hydrogen + FBTR — Key Facts	WORLD'S FIRST: Hydrogen Production Facility based on Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle using nuclear heat. Location: IGCAR (Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research), Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu. Nuclear reactor used: FBTR (Fast Breeder Test Reactor) — a sodium-cooled fast spectrum reactor, India's Stage 2 nuclear programme. Process developer: BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre), Mumbai — indigenously developed. Inaugurated by: Ajit Kumar Mohanty (DAE Secretary + AEC Chairman). What Cu-Cl cycle does: Splits water into H_2 + O_2 using a series of chemical reactions at 400-550°C using nuclear waste heat; thermochemical (not electrolysis); produces carbon-free hydrogen. Why significant: Demonstrates nuclear energy as a clean hydrogen source; higher thermodynamic efficiency than electrolysis; addresses India's National Green Hydrogen Mission (5 MMTPA by 2030) with a nuclear pathway. FBTR: India's first fast breeder reactor;

	operational since 1985; key platform for Stage 2 of India's 3-stage nuclear power programme; feeds into PFBR (500 MW, also at Kalpakkam, nearing completion).
NFSA 2013 Amendments — Key Numbers	National Food Security Act 2013: Covers 81.35 crore persons (67% of India). Two categories: Priority Households (PH) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). AMENDMENT: PH entitlement raised from 5 kg/person/month to 7 kg/person/month; NEW household cap: 35 kg/month (prevents large households from disproportionate gain). AAY households: 35 kg/household/month (unchanged — already at 35 kg). PM-GKAY merger: Since January 2023, grains are free (zero cost) for all NFSA beneficiaries. Prices (pre-free): Rice Rs 3/kg; Wheat Rs 2/kg; Coarse grains Rs 1/kg. ONORC (One Nation One Ration Card): Aadhaar-linked portability; can collect from any Fair Price Shop anywhere in India. Legal basis: Right to Food — PUCL v Union of India (2001 SC) → NFSA 2013 enacted.
Genocide Convention + ICJ + UN CoI on Gaza	Genocide Convention 1948: Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Genocide; 153 state parties including India (ratified 1959); Article 2 defines genocide as specific acts WITH intent to destroy a group; Article 9 = ICJ jurisdiction. ICJ (International Court of Justice): South Africa v Israel case (filed December 2023); ICJ provisional measures (January 2024) ordered Israel to prevent genocidal acts; final judgment years away. UN CoI on OPT: UN Human Rights Council body; independent; Israel doesn't cooperate; June 2026 report found 'genocidal intent' — not a judicial finding but influential evidence. ICC: International Criminal Court; separate from ICJ; arrested warrant issued November 2024 for Netanyahu, Gallant (Israel), Hamas leaders (October 7 attacks); international criminal responsibility (individuals), not state responsibility. India's position: Abstained on multiple UNGA Gaza resolutions; supports two-state solution; does not characterise Israel operations as genocide.
NCORD + Narcotics + NDPS Act	NCORD: Narco Coordination Centre; established 2016 under MHA. 4-tier structure: Apex (Home Minister) → Executive (Home Secretary) → State → District. Agencies: NCB (Narcotics Control Bureau), DRI, CBI, Customs, State Police. 10th Apex Meeting: June 26, 2026; Amit Shah; unveiled 'Vision Document on Drug Control 2026-2029.' Drug routes: Golden Crescent (Afg-Pak-Iran → NW India); Golden Triangle (Myanmar-Laos-Thailand → NE India); Sea routes (Gujarat-Maharashtra coast); Dark web/online. NDPS Act 1985: Governs narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; NCB under Ministry of Home Affairs; penalties: small quantity (6 months-1 year); commercial quantity (10-20 years); Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan: MoSJE's demand-reduction programme.
Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) for NBFCs + Tata Sons	SBR Framework (RBI, October 2021): 4-tier NBFC classification: Base Layer (low systemic risk, minimal regulation); Middle Layer (moderate regulation); Upper Layer (bank-like regulation + mandatory stock exchange listing within 3 years); Top Layer (highest, no NBFC currently designated — would face bank-equivalent regulation). Upper Layer: Top 10 NBFCs by regulatory score (asset size + leverage + interconnectedness); Tata Sons, Bajaj Finance, L&T Finance etc. Tata Sons situation: Designated Upper Layer NBFC in 2022; required to list by September 2025; 2026 revised rules may exempt pure holding companies with listed subsidiaries from listing requirement; RBI hasn't formally confirmed. India's NBFC sector: Rs 35 lakh crore credit; 40%+ of MSME credit; IL&FS (2018) and DHFL (2019) failures = SBR framework origin.

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place	Why in News / Key Facts
Bandar Abbas, Iran	Iran's main port on the Strait of Hormuz; IRGC naval headquarters for Hormuz operations; the 'Persian Gulf Strait Authority' is effectively operated from here; opposite the Musandam Peninsula of Oman; 3 foreign tankers were 'turned back' here after IRGC warnings (June 26, 2026).

Ever Lovely (near Oman)	Singapore-flagged Evergreen Marine container ship struck on June 25, 2026 while transiting UKMTO's recommended southern Hormuz route near Oman's Musandam Peninsula; Iran fired on it according to 2 US officials; IMO paused Hormuz convoy operations after this incident.
Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu	Site of: IGCAR (Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research) — India's fast reactor research centre since 1971; FBTR (Fast Breeder Test Reactor, operational since 1985); PFBR (Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor, 500 MW, nearing completion); June 26: World's first Cu-Cl thermochemical hydrogen facility inaugurated here.
Jonnagiri, Kurnool, AP	India's largest private sector gold mining project (Deccan Gold Mines Ltd); Dharwar Craton geology; ~27 tonnes proven gold reserves; 1.5-2 tonnes/year production (Phase 1); Rs 700 crore investment; Kurnool district on the border of AP and Telangana.
Seychelles (Victoria)	PM Modi visiting as part of Indian Ocean diplomatic outreach; capital: Victoria (world's smallest capital city in terms of population); Indian diaspora ~5% of Seychelles' 96,000 population; Assumption Island (south of Seychelles) = joint India-Seychelles maritime facility under development; Indian Ocean SAGAR doctrine.
Musandam Peninsula, Oman	The Omani exclave that juts into the Strait of Hormuz from the south; strategically critical — forms the southern shore of the strait; the UKMTO's 'southern route' (used by Ever Lovely) navigates through Omani territorial waters here; Oman's territory is key to any alternative Hormuz route.
Naihati, West Bengal	Birthplace of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (June 27, 1838); on the banks of the Hooghly River; district: North 24 Parganas; PM Modi paid tribute on Bankim's jayanti; Bankim was a Deputy Collector who worked in Jessore and Khulna (now Bangladesh); Anandamath (1882), which contains Vande Mataram, was authored during his tenure.
Kolhapur, Maharashtra	Seat of Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj (1874-1922); introduced 50% reservation for backward classes in Kolhapur State government jobs in 1902 — India's first formal affirmative action policy; patron of Dr B.R. Ambedkar's early education; significant social reformer of western Maharashtra.

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